Chapter One-alt intro story /super teen intro

MRS T CHATS WITH JASON ABOUT NOT WANTING COLLEGE - CARLOS TRIES TO PERSUAY HIM -ADD ON 20 PG USE THE WASHINGTON HIGH BOOK COVER TEST

really good started/ edited.

three years before the fiasco

jason wants to be a rapper after the really and rejects a great college offer and mrs t. does not agree with the decision even takes his car keys---------

The Last Normal Friday/pep rally

The final bell at West Ridge High didn't ring.

It screamed. echoed down the well built archaic halls of

historically black highschool, the kids called the beast, a big old stable structure going back to the days of civil rights leaders, thing had some renovations but mostly old dusty relics from the past .

The old speaker crackled with static before a loud metallic shriek echoed through every hallway.

"Eeeeeeeeee..."

Students froze.

Then the principal's voice returned, Dr fulgore The rudest principle ever .

"...Sorry about that, ok so we have a suprise i think . Have a safe weekend." oh , dont forget about the pep ralley friday

we have special musical guess , rapper cash grill, and the plenty money boys will be here.

The halls exploded into noise, excitement , loud and audacious.

“lame” some body yelled in the back ground , while must buzzed with interest.

Lockers slammed. Teens danced , twerked and others simply locked up their books and went home, the day was hot and zesty more so than natural.

“cash grill is coming , ooh he is cute” one girl said putting her books in teh looker

“cute if you into deep sea fish looking brothas , he is not not for me girl no “ no way i like pretty men.

Sneakers squeaked across polished floors. nikes, pumas boots and sandals .

Everybody was laughing, yelling, recording TikToks, arguing over basketball, and trying to beat the buses.

Jason shrugged, grabbed his backpack, and followed his friend through the hallway.

Music leaked from somebody's headphones. “boom boom boom “ the melody faded as he passed by

Girls practiced dance moves in front of trophy cases. stopped immediatly by lame hall monitors dedicated to a free job.

The football team crowded around the vending machine.

Everybody wanted to get home.

Everybody except Mr. Wilson.

The history teacher stood outside his classroom with his arms crossed.

"jones !"

Terrell sighed.

"Man...what now?"

"You still owe me two pages on Reconstruction of civil law "

"I reconstructed enough."

"You reconstructed excuses."

Jason laughed.

Mr. Wilson pointed.

"You laughing too."

"I ain't even in your class."

"You guilty by association."

"That's illegal."

"It should be."

The three laughed.

Terrell leaned toward Jason.

"See? That's why I like him. He roast people professionally."

"You still failing."

"...Never mind."

They walked away laughing.

Outside, the September sun lit up the campus.

Cars lined the student parking lot.

Basketballs bounced on the outdoor courts.

Fresh-cut grass mixed with the smell of pizza from the cafeteria vents.

West Ridge High looked ordinary.

Normal.

Safe.

At least it tried to.

A skinny freshman suddenly sprinted across the courtyard screaming.

"IT MOVED!"

Everybody looked.

"What moved?"

"The statue!"

Students burst into laughter.

"The zombie !"

"The mascot?"

"It blinked!"

A senior shook his head.

"Freshmen weird."

Another student yelled,

"You been eating cafeteria meat again?"

More laughter.

The frightened freshman pointed toward the bronze zombie statue in front of the school.

It stood perfectly still.

Exactly where it had always been.

Jason looked at it anyway.

"...You ever notice its eyes?" maybe an omen

Terrell rolled his own.

"Bro..."

"They look different."

"They literally made outta metal."

Jason shrugged.

"I know."

Still...

For just a split second...

He could've sworn the eagle wasn't looking toward the football field anymore.

It looked at him.

cutie Maya cc Johnson caught up with them.

She carried three books, headphones around her neck, and always looked like she knew something everybody else didn't.

She wasn't the loudest person.

She wasn't the quietest either.

She noticed things.

"You two waiting on the bus?" she said popping her lips and adding gloss

"Nah," Terrell said.

"My cousin picking me up."

Jason nodded.

"My mama working late."

Maya looked toward the statue.

"...Y'all hear what happened this morning?"

"What?"

"The janitor quit."

"They always quit."

"No."

She lowered her voice.

"He said somebody was inside the gym before sunrise."

"So?"

"The cameras never showed anybody."

Jason smiled.

"You trying to scare us?"

"I ain't trying."

Terrell laughed.

"You watch too many horror movies."

Maya shrugged.

"Maybe."

"But?"

"He kept saying..."

She paused.

"...he heard somebody humming."

Jason smirked.

"Humming?"

"Old church songs."

Terrell burst out laughing.

"So...the ghost love gospel?"

"I'm serious."

Jason laughed too.

"Ghost trying to get saved."

The three nearly fell over laughing.

Across the parking lot...

Someone watched them.

An old man.

Long black coat.

Wide-brimmed hat.

Gold chains.

Standing beside an old white Cadillac.

Nobody else seemed to notice him.

He smiled.

His gold tooth flashed.

Then—

A school bus rolled between him and the students.

When it passed...

He was gone.

Jason frowned.

"You see that?"

"See what?"

"Old dude."

"What old dude?"

Jason looked around.

Nothing.

Maybe he imagined it.

The wind suddenly stopped.

Every flag around campus hung perfectly still.

Not moving.

Not even an inch.

Birds stopped chirping.

The entire courtyard became strangely quiet.

Students looked around.

"What happened?"

"My AirPods disconnected."

"My phone froze."

"My music stopped."

Every phone screen...

Went black.

For exactly three seconds.

One...

Two...

Three...

Then everything came back on.

Students shrugged.

"That was weird."

"Probably the Wi-Fi."

"School cheap."

Life continued.

But Maya looked nervous.

"Did y'all feel that?"

Jason nodded.

"My chest got cold."

Terrell rubbed his arms.

"...Mine too."

Near the fence sat an old stray dog.

Everybody knew him.

Students called him Principal.

Nobody knew why.

The dog never barked.

Never begged.

He simply watched people leave school every day.

Today...

Principal growled.

Not at students.

Not at cars.

He growled toward the woods behind the football stadium.

Hair standing straight up.

Tail tucked.

Whining.

Then he ran.

As fast as anyone had ever seen.

Straight into traffic.

A truck slammed on its brakes.

The dog disappeared beneath it.

Students screamed.

"Oh snap!"

The truck stopped.

People rushed over.

Nothing.

No dog.

No blood.

No fur.

Nothing.

The driver climbed out confused.

"I KNOW I hit him!"

Students searched underneath.

Empty.

The dog had vanished.

"Okay..."

Terrell whispered.

"...That one weird."

Jason nodded slowly.

"Real weird."

Maya stared toward the woods.

"...Something don't want us here."

"You serious?"

"I don't know."

"But something watching."

The loud bass of an approaching car interrupted the silence.

A bright blue Charger rolled into the parking lot.

Music blasted through open windows.

Their friend DeShawn leaned halfway out.

"What y'all standing around looking scary for?"

Jason laughed.

"Ghost dog."

DeShawn blinked.

"...Ghost what?"

"The school weird."

"It always weird."

"You right."

DeShawn parked.

"You coming to the talent show tonight?"

Terrell grinned.

"If Jason stop acting like every leaf possessed."

"I ain't scared."

"You definitely scared."

"I ain't scared of ghosts."

"What about demons?"

Jason stopped smiling.

"...Depends."

Everybody laughed.

Except Maya.

Far beyond the football field...

Hidden between thick pine trees...

Someone laughed.

Softly.

Like dry leaves scraping across stone.

A crow landed on the fence.

Its eyes looked strangely red.

Then another crow appeared.

Then another.

Soon nearly thirty crows lined the fence.

Silent.

Watching.

Every one of them faced Jason and Terrell.

Not another student.

Just them.

Jason felt the hairs on his neck rise.

"...Tell me they ain't staring at us."

Terrell finally looked.

His smile faded.

"...Yeah."

"They definitely are."

The crows lifted into the air all at once.

Their wings beat together with a sound almost like

whispered words.

For a heartbeat…

Jason thought he heard a man's voice drifting on the wind.

"Soon."

Then the birds scattered into the afternoon sky.

Chapter Three – Dreams and Dead Ends

The smell of baked macaroni, fried chicken, and lemon furniture polish floated through the tiny apartment.

Mrs. Tanya Brooks—known to everybody on the block as Mrs. T—sat proudly at the kitchen table wearing her reading glasses. An expensive cream-colored envelope rested in front of her.

Jason leaned against the refrigerator pretending not to care.

His older brother Carlos stood nearby stealing chicken wings off a plate.

Mrs. T smiled so wide her cheeks hurt.

"You know," she said, clearing her throat dramatically, "I been waiting seventeen years to open one of these."

Jason laughed.

"Mama, just read it."

Carlos grabbed another wing.

"Read it before I eat everything. This chicken got a scholarship too."

Mrs. T pointed a finger.

"Carlos... if one more wing disappear, your scholarship gonna disappear."

Carlos slowly put the wing back.

"...I respect the process."

Jason chuckled.

Mrs. T carefully unfolded the letter.

"'Dear Mr. Jason Brooks. Congratulations...'"

She stopped.

Covered her mouth.

"Oh my Lord..."

Jason frowned.

"What?"

She looked at him with watery eyes.

"You got in."

Jason blinked.

"What?"

"You got into Hampton University."

Carlos exploded.

"LET'S GO!"

He tackled Jason into a hug.

"My little brother smart!"

Jason laughed while trying to breathe.

"Man... get off me!"

Mrs. T stood up crying.

"Baby... first person in this family going to college."

She hugged Jason so hard his feet nearly left the floor.

"I knew God had something special for you."

Jason smiled awkwardly.

"...Thanks, Ma."

Mrs. T walked around the apartment like she'd just won the lottery.

"I'm calling Grandma."

"I'm calling Auntie Denise."

"I'm posting this."

Carlos laughed.

"Mama don't even know how Facebook work."

"I'll learn TODAY."

Everyone laughed.

For one perfect minute...

Everything felt right.

Then Jason scratched the back of his neck.

"...Mama."

Mrs. T looked over.

"What?"

"I gotta tell you something."

Carlos immediately recognized the voice.

It was Jason's "I'm about to ruin everybody's day" voice.

"Oh no..."

Mrs. T smiled.

"What is it?"

Jason looked down.

"I don't think I'm going."

Silence.

Carlos slowly stopped chewing.

Mrs. T stared.

"...Going where?"

"College."

The room froze.

Even the refrigerator seemed quieter.

Mrs. T laughed.

"Boy, quit playing."

"I'm serious."

Her smile disappeared.

"What do you mean serious?"

Jason inhaled.

"I wanna rap."

Carlos closed his eyes.

"Oh Lord..."

Mrs. T blinked twice.

"...Rap?"

Jason nodded.

"I've been recording with Terrell."

"We got songs."

"We building a following."

"I think this is my shot."

Mrs. T stared at him another few seconds.

Then folded the acceptance letter...

Very...

Very slowly.

"So..."

She said calmly.

"You telling me..."

Jason swallowed.

"You throwing away a full scholarship..."

"...to become Lil' Whoever?"

Carlos covered his face.

"Jason..."

Jason raised both hands.

"It ain't like that."

"We actually good."

"Our videos getting views."

Mrs. T folded the letter again.

"So that's the plan?"

Jason nodded.

"I think God gave me music."

Mrs. T looked toward the ceiling.

"Lord..."

She whispered.

"I asked for patience."

Carlos quietly slid his plate farther away.

He knew what was coming.

Mrs. T suddenly exploded.

"BOY HAVE YOU LOST YOUR EVERLASTING MIND?"

Jason jumped.

"Mama—"

"I worked TWO JOBS!"

"I missed birthdays!"

"I wore shoes with holes in them!"

"So you could have choices!"

Jason spoke softly.

"I appreciate that."

"You appreciate it by saying NO?"

"I just don't wanna spend four years studying something I don't love."

Mrs. T pointed toward the acceptance letter.

"You know how many kids prayed for this?"

Jason looked away.

"I know."

"No you don't."

Carlos finally stepped in.

"Mama..."

She spun around.

"Don't 'Mama' me!"

Carlos slowly backed up.

"...Never mind."

Jason sighed.

"I wanna build something."

Mrs. T crossed her arms.

"So you gonna be rich next week?"

"No."

"Next month?"

"No."

"So who's paying car insurance?"

Jason stayed quiet.

Mrs. T reached into her purse.

"Give me those keys."

Jason frowned.

"What?"

"The car."

Jason looked confused.

"Mama..."

"The keys."

Silence.

He slowly reached into his pocket.

His fingers tightened around them.

Mrs. T extended her hand.

"The keys."

Jason reluctantly dropped them into her palm.

The jingle echoed through the apartment.

Mrs. T slipped them into her purse.

"You wanna chase rap dreams?"

"You can catch the city bus."

Carlos tried not to laugh.

Jason shot him a look.

"Dude..."

Carlos shrugged.

"I ain't laughing..."

A tiny snort escaped.

Mrs. T glared.

"Carlos."

His smile disappeared.

"Yes ma'am."

"You think this funny?"

"No ma'am."

Jason grabbed his hoodie.

"I'm going outside."

Mrs. T sat back down.

"You'll thank me one day."

Jason opened the door.

"Maybe."

The apartment door slammed.

Hard.

An hour later...

The neighborhood basketball court echoed with bouncing basketballs and squeaking sneakers.

Carlos sank an easy three-pointer.

Swish.

Jason caught the rebound without saying anything.

Carlos dribbled beside him.

"You really doing this?"

Jason nodded.

"Yeah."

Carlos sighed.

"You know Mama ain't mad because of rap."

"I know."

"She scared."

Jason spun the basketball on one finger.

"I don't wanna live somebody else's dream."

Carlos nodded.

"I get it."

"But dreams don't pay rent right away."

Jason smiled.

"You sounding old."

"I'm twenty-four."

"You thirty in big-brother years."

Both laughed.

Carlos bounced the ball back.

"Listen..."

"If you really serious..."

"Do music."

"But don't throw college away."

"You can do both."

Jason shrugged.

"I don't know."

Carlos looked toward the woods beyond the school fence.

The afternoon sun disappeared behind strange gray clouds.

For just a second...

He thought he saw someone standing perfectly still between the trees.

A tall man.

Long black coat.

Wide-brim hat.

Watching them.

Carlos blinked.

The figure was gone.

Jason noticed.

"What?"

Carlos forced a smile.

"Nothing."

But somewhere beyond the basketball court...

Something smiled back.

Sent with Proton Mail secure email.